

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 19746 01 OF 03 172124Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AF-10 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MOSCOW 19746

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: FR, UR
SUBJECT: FRANCO-SOVIET CONSULTATIONS ON AFRICA

SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO FRENCH EMBOFF, FRANCO-SOVIET
CONSULTATIONS ON AFRICA IN MOSCOW AUGUST 9-10
PROCEEDED IN A GOOD ATMOSPHERE WITH THE TWO SIDES
OFFERING "FRANK" COMMENTS ON THE ISSUES. THE
SOVIETS SEEMED PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT WESTERN
PROPAGANDA DIRECTED AGAINST SOVIET AFRICAN POLICY.
THE TWO SIDES KEPT CRITICISM OF THIRD COUNTRIES
TO A MINIMUM AND REPORTEDLY SKIRTED SERIOUS DIS-
CUSSION OF MORE CONTENTIOUS ISSUES SUCH AS CUBAN
INVOLVEMENT. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TALKS PROBABLY
TIES MORE IN THE TWO SIDES' SUCCESS IN ADDRESSING
AFRICAN PROBLEMS IN A BILATERAL FRAMEWORK THAN IN
THE SUBSTANCE OF THE EXCHANGE. END SUMMARY.

1. FRENCH EMBASSY COUNSELOR (PLEASE PROTECT
FRENCH EMBASSY AS SOURCE) GAVE EMBOFF SESSION-BY-
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 19746 01 OF 03 172124Z

SESSION READ-OUT OF FRANCO-SOVIET CONSULTATIONS ON
AFRICA IN MOSCOW AUGUST 9-10. DIRECTOR OF QUAI
AFRICAN DEPARTMENT GEORGIY AND TWO DEPUTIES TOOK
PART ON THE FRENCH SIDE WHILE THE SOVIETS WERE
HEADED BY MFA DEPUTY MINISTER IL'ICHEV (WHO,
INCIDENTALLY, MADE NO COMMENT ON, NOR WAS ASKED
ABOUT, THE SINO-SOVIET BORDER QUESTIONS WITH WHICH

HE HAS LONG DEALT). THE FRENCH IN GENERAL WERE PLEASED WITH THE OVERALL ATMOSPHERE; PROPAGANDA WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN ABSENT; AND THIRD-PARTY CRITICISM (I.E., OF U.S., U.K., PRC) WAS KEPT TO A MINIMUM. THE FOCUS THROUGHOUT REMAINED ON A "FRANK" EXCHANGE OF RESPECTIVE VIEWS OF THE AFRICAN SITUATION, ALTHOUGH SOME CONTENTIOUS ISSUES, SUCH AS CUBAN POLICY, WERE SKIRTED AND OTHERS WERE DEALT WITH ONLY SUPERFICIALLY.

2. AUGUST 9 MORNING SESSION: IL'ICHEV USED BREZHNEV'S AND GISCARD'S AGREEMENT ON EXTENDING DETENTE TO ALL REGIONS OF THE WORLD AS A STARTING POINT TO STRESS THE NEED FOR "COMPLETE LIBERATION" OF THE CONTINENT AND REINFORCEMENT OF THE INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES. IN CONTEXT OF STRESSING THAT FRENCH AND SOVIET POLICY SHOULD BE DIRECTED TOWARD STRENGTHENING THE CONTINENT'S PEACE AND SECURITY, IL'ICHEV CRITICIZED THE PROMOTION OF "MINI-BLOCS" AS WELL AS PROPAGANDA DIRECTED AGAINST SOVIET AFRICAN POLICY. RESPONDING, GEORGIY DESCRIBED FRENCH POLICY AS SUPPORTING NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE, TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, EQUALITY OF AFRICAN REGIMES, AFRICAN INSTITUTIONS (E.G., OAU), AND AFRICAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (FRENCH SIDE EMPHASIZED LATTER POINT THROUGHOUT

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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 19746 01 OF 03 172124Z

THE SESSIONS). GEORGIY THEN REBUTTED CHARGES OF FRENCH ANTI-SOVIET PROPAGANDA, AND COMMENTED ON IL'ICHEV'S PRESENTATION, RAISING PROBLEM OF FRENCH-SOVIET DISAGREEMENT IN PRACTICE ON THE MEANING OF "ANTI-COLONIALISM," WHILE NOTING THAT GENERAL ACCORD SEEMED TO EXIST CONCERNING THE PRINCIPLE.

3. AUGUST 9 AFTERNOON SESSION: SOVIET SIDE WAS CHAIRED BY FIRST AFRICAN DEPARTMENT CHIEF SHVEDOV, ACCOMPANIED BY ALL HIS DEPUTIES (IL'ICHEV DROPPED OUT FROM THE SESSIONS AFTER THE MFA-HOSTED LUNCHEON BUT SHOWED UP FOR THE LAST SESSION). SHVEDOV EXPLAINED THE WORKINGS OF HIS DEPARTMENT, NOTING HIS STAFF NUMBERS SIXTY PERSONS (WE UNDERSTAND GEORGIY'S NUMBERS FIFTEEN). EXCHANGES FOLLOWED ON WESTERN SAHARA (SHVEDOV "JOKED" ABOUT MOROCCO'S SELLING COBALT TO THE PRC), AND THE FRENCH BRIEFED THE SOVIETS - AT THEIR REQUEST - ON BOUTEFILKA'S VISIT TO PARIS. BOTH SIDES AGREED THE WEST SAHARAN COUNTRIES DESIRE PEACE, BUT THEY CANNOT PROCEED ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS AND PROBABLY WON'T PROCEED ON A MULTILATERAL BASIS. THE FRENCH QUESTIONED

ALGERIA'S DESIRE FOR PEACE, CITING ITS UNWILLINGNESS TO COMPROMISE, BUT THE SOVIET SIDE DEMURRED AND SUGGESTED THAT BOUMEDIENNE COULD NOT MOVE UNTIL AFTER "THE CONGRESS" (FRENCH EMBOFF WHO GAVE US READ-OUT WAS NOT CERTAIN WHICH "CONGRESS" THE SOVIETS HAD IN MIND). THERE WAS ONLY SUPERFICIAL DISCUSSION ON POLISARIO AND CHAD, ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE.

4. AUGUST 10 MORNING SESSION: SECOND AFRICAN DEPARTMENT CHIEF LIKHACHEV OPENED FOR THE SOVIET SIDE BY READING PREPARED PAPER. IT REFLECTED

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 19746 02 OF 03 180137Z
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CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 HA-05 MCT-02 PA-01 ICA-11
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 MOSCOW 19746

SOVIET PREOCCUPATION WITH THE "ANTI-SOVIET" ATTITUDE OF IVORY COAST AND, TO LESSER EXTENT, ZAIRE. FRENCH SIDE ATTRIBUTED HUOPHOUET-BOIGNY'S ATTITUDE TO HIS EXPERIENCES AS A COMMUNIST DEPUTY IN 1946-1947. THE FRENCH THEN EXPLAINED THEIR (EMPHASIS ON "THEIR" PUT BY OUR BRIEFER) ACTIONS IN ZAIRE (I.E., FRAGILE NATURE OF THE ZAIRIAN NATION-STATE, ITS NEED FOR STABILITY, ETC.). THE SOVIETS, TO FRENCH SURPRISE, DID NOT VIGOROUSLY ATTACK THIS EXPLANATION, AND DID NOT RAISE U.S., BELGIAN, AND NATO INVOLVEMENT, ALTHOUGH THESE HAVE BEEN PROMINENT THEMES IN MOSCOW'S PROPAGANDA. RESPONDING TO A FRENCH REQUEST, THE SOVIETS EXPLAINED THEIR POLICY IN THE CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE), ADMITTED "DIFFICULTIES" EXIST, AND

RATIONALIZED THE SITUATION WITH A GARBLED COMMENT THAT "WE'RE NOT LIKE JESUS, WE CAN'T MAKE BREAD FROM FISH."

5. AUGUST 10 AFTERNOON SESSION: A DEPUTY CHIEF MFA THIRD AFRICAN DEPARTMENT (FRENCH BRIEFER DID CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 19746 02 OF 03 180137Z

NOT HAVE HIS NAME AT HAND) LED SOVIET SIDE IN DISCUSSIONS WHICH COVERED NAMIBIA, RHODESIA AND SOUTH AFRICA. ON NAMIBIA, FRENCH EXPLAINED ROLE OF CONTACT GROUP AND IN PASSING PROTESTED SOVIET ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SETTLEMENT AS REFLECTED IN ITS PRESS. SOVIETS RESPONDED THAT THEY ARE FOR A PEACEFUL SOLUTION IN NAMIBIA IF IT IS "JUST." THEY EXPLAINED THEY DID NOT VOTE AGAINST THE UN EFFORT IN NAMIBIA BECAUSE SWAPO AND SOME OTHER AFRICAN STATES ASKED THEM NOT TO DO SO. THE SOVIETS SAID THEY ARE NOT SURE, HOWEVER, THAT THE PROPOSED SOLUTION CONFORMS TO PREVIOUS UN RESOLUTIONS.

6. ON RHODESIA, THE FRENCH SAID THIS WAS A DECOLONIALIZATION PROBLEM FOR WHICH THE BRITISH HAD PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY. FRANCE HAD NO DIRECT INTEREST. THE SOVIETS COMMENTED THAT THEY DID NOT WANT TO SEE "UN FLAG" FLYING OVER THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PLAN. THE SOVIETS ATTACKED THE FRENCH ARMS RELATIONSHIP WITH SOUTH AFRICA, COMPARING FRENCH POLICY UNFAVORABLY TO U.S. POLICY. THE FRENCH EXPLAINED IN REPLY THAT FRANCE, HAVING A "LIBERAL" ECONOMIC SYSTEM WHICH IT DOES, COULD NOT EASILY CONTROL SUCH SALES. IT HAD ATTEMPTED TO CONTROL LICENSING FOR ARMS PRODUCTION. IN ANY EVENT, FRANCE IS NO LONGER SUPPLYING ARMS. THE FRENCH SAID SOUTH AFRICA REPRESENTED A DIFFERENT KIND OF PROBLEM THAN RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA: THE PROBLEM WAS TO ELIMINATE APARTHEID. THE WHITES WOULD REMAIN, AND THE SOVIETS SHOULD NOT THEMSELVES STIR UP RACISM.

7. AUGUST 10 EVENING (FINAL) SESSION: WITH IL'ICHEV PRESENT, FRENCH WENT OVER SAHARAN ISSUES CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MOSCOW 19746 02 OF 03 180137Z

AGAIN, EXPRESSING HOPE THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD MAKE AN EFFORT SIMILAR TO FRENCH TO BRING PEACE TO REGION. THE FRENCH TOUCHED BRIEFLY ON CHAD AND

ZAIRE. IL'ICHEV BROUGHT UP THE HORN, NOT EARLIER DISCUSSED BECAUSE OF A LACK OF TIME. IL'ICHEV TRIED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT UNDERLYING SOVIET AND FRENCH POLICIES IN THE REGION WERE THE SAME. THE FRENCH ACCUSED THE SOVIETS OF NOT BEING "CAUTIOUS" IN OVER-SUPPLYING SOMALIA WITH ARMS. IL'ICHEV EXPLAINED THAT THE SOVIETS HAD BEEN OPPOSED TO SOMALI EXPANSIONISM, THAT BARRE HAD TURNED ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY DEGREES, AND HIS "ADVENTURISTIC" POLICY MERITED NO HEARING. IL'ICHEV HIMSELF BROUGHT UP CUBA BY NOTING "SOME PEOPLE" SPOKE OF CUBAN "INTERVENTION" BUT THIS WAS NOT A GOOD WORD TO DESCRIBE THEIR ROLE.

8. IN CONCLUDING, IL'ICHEV TRIED TO PUT A HIGHLY POSITIVE GLOSS ON THE CONSULTATIONS' "SINCERITY AND GOOD WILL," AND SUGGESTED THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES' "FEELING" FOR THE AFRICAN PEOPLES WAS CLEAR. AN EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE, HOWEVER, TO ENSURE THAT THE POLICY AND THE MEDIA LINES (OF EACH GOVERNMENT) MATCH. HE REPEATED THAT THE SOVIET UNION WANTS TO AVOID ANY EXACERBATION OF AFRICAN CONFLICTS AND SEEKS PEACE ON THE CONTINENT, NOT THROUGH MINI-BLOCS BUT THROUGH THE OAU.

9. COMMENT: DESPITE APPARENT FRENCH SATISFACTION, WE DOUBT EITHER SIDE LEFT THE CONSULTATIONS WITH A PROFOUNDER UNDERSTANDING OF THE OTHER'S PERSPECTIVE. THEIR IMPORTANCE PROBABLY LIES MORE IN THEIR HAVING TAKEN PLACE, ESPECIALLY IN THE WAKE OF THE RECRIMI-

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 19746 03 OF 03 180137Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 MOSCOW 19746

NATIONS ISSUING FROM PARIS AND MOSCOW SEVERAL MONTHS
AGO ON AFRICAN ISSUES. IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO
SEE WHETHER THE FRENCH SOON CHOOSE TO REPEAT THE
EXERCISE, IN RELATION TO AFRICA OR OTHER TROUBLED
REGIONS.

10. FOR DEPARTMENT: PLEASE REPEAT AS APPROPRIATE.
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